**[](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2962.html)Frederick Douglas (1818 – 1895)**

Frederick Douglass stood at the podium, trembling with nervousness. Before him sat abolitionists who had travelled to the Massachusetts island of Nantucket. Only 23 years old at the time, Douglass overcame his nervousness and gave a stirring, eloquent speech about his life as a slave. Douglass would continue to give speeches for the rest of his life and would become a leading spokesperson for the abolition of slavery and for racial equality.  
  
The son of a slave woman and an unknown white man, "Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey" was born in February of 1818 on Maryland's eastern shore. He spent his early years with his grandparents and with an aunt, seeing his mother only four or five times before her death when he was seven. (All Douglass knew of his father was that he was white.) During this time he was exposed to the degradations of slavery, witnessing firsthand brutal whippings and spending much time cold and hungry. When he was eight he was sent to Baltimore to live with a ship carpenter named Hugh Auld. There he learned to read and first heard the words abolition and abolitionists. "Going to live at Baltimore," Douglass would later say, "laid the foundation, and opened the gateway, to all my subsequent prosperity."  
  
Douglass spent seven relatively comfortable years in Baltimore before being sent back to the country, where he was hired out to a farm run by a notoriously brutal "slavebreaker" named Edward Covey. The treatment he received there was indeed brutal as he was whipped daily and barely fed. Douglass later said he was "broken in body, soul, and spirit."  
  
On January 1, 1836, Douglass made a resolution that he would be free by the end of the year. He planned an escape. But early in April he was jailed after his plan was discovered. Two years later, while living in Baltimore and working at a shipyard, Douglass would finally realize his dream: he fled the city on September 3, 1838. Travelling by train, then steamboat, then train, he arrived in New York City the following day. Several weeks later he had settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts, living with his newlywed bride (whom he met in Baltimore and married in New York) under his new name, Frederick Douglass.  
  
Always striving to educate himself, Douglass continued his reading. He joined various organizations in New Bedford, including a black church. He attended Abolitionists' meetings. He subscribed to William Lloyd Garrison's weekly journal, the *Liberator*. In 1841, he saw Garrison speak at the Bristol Anti-Slavery Society's annual meeting. Douglass was inspired by the speaker, later stating, "no face and form ever impressed me with such sentiments [the hatred of slavery] as did those of William Lloyd Garrison." Garrison, too, was impressed with Douglass, mentioning him in the *Liberator*. Several days later Douglass gave his speech at the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society's annual convention in Nantucket-- the speech described at the top of this page. Of the speech, one correspondent reported, "Flinty hearts were pierced, and cold ones melted by his eloquence." Before leaving the island, Douglass was asked to become a lecturer for the Society for three years. It was the launch of a career that would continue throughout Douglass' long life.  
  
Despite apprehensions that the information might endanger his freedom, Douglass published his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written By Himself*. The year was 1845. Three years later, after a speaking tour of England, Ireland, and Scotland, Douglass published the first issue of the *North Star*, a four-page weekly, out of Rochester, New York.   
  
Ever since he first met Garrison in 1841, the white abolitionist leader had been Douglass' mentor. But the views of Garrison and Douglass ultimately diverged. Garrison represented the radical end of the abolitionist spectrum. He denounced churches, political parties, even voting. He believed in the dissolution (break up) of the Union. He also believed that the U.S. Constitution was a pro-slavery document. After his tour of Europe and the establishment of his paper, Douglass' views began to change; he was becoming more of an independent thinker, more pragmatic. In 1851 Douglass announced at a meeting in Syracuse, New York, that he did not assume the Constitution was a pro-slavery document, and that it could even "be wielded in behalf of emancipation," especially where the federal government had exclusive jurisdiction. Douglass also did not advocate the dissolution of the Union, since it would isolate slaves in the South. This led to a bitter dispute between Garrison and Douglass that, despite the efforts of others such as Harriet Beecher Stowe to reconcile the two, would last into the Civil War.   
  
Frederick Douglass would continue his active involvement to better the lives of African Americans. He conferred with Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War and recruited northern blacks for the Union Army. After the War he fought for the rights of women and African Americans alike.

**William Lloyd Garrison (1805 – 1879)**

[](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2950.html)In the very first issue of his anti-slavery newspaper, the *Liberator*, William Lloyd Garrison stated, "I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. . . . I am in earnest -- I will not equivocate -- I will not excuse -- I will not retreat a single inch -- AND I WILL BE HEARD." And Garrison was heard. For more than three decades, from the first issue of his weekly paper in 1831, until after the end of the Civil War in 1865 when the last issue was published, Garrison spoke out eloquently and passionately against slavery and for the rights of America's black inhabitants.  
  
The son of a merchant sailing master, William Lloyd Garrison was born in Newburyport, Massachusetts, in 1805. Due in large measure to the Embargo Act, which Congress had passed in 1807, the Garrison family fell on hard times while William was still young. In 1808 William's father deserted the family, forcing them to scrounge for food from more prosperous families and forcing William to work, selling homemade molasses candy and delivering wood.  
  
In 1818, after suffering through various apprenticeships, Garrison began work for the Newburyport Herald as a writer and editor. This job and subsequent newspaper jobs would give the young Garrison the skills he would utilize so expertly when he later published his own paper.   
  
When he was 25, Garrison joined the Abolition movement. He became associated with the American Colonization Society, an organization that believed free blacks should emigrate to a territory on the west coast of Africa. At first glance the society seemed to promote the freedom and happiness of blacks. There certainly were members who encouraged the manumission (granting of freedom) to slaves. However, it turned out that the number of members advocating manumission constituted a minority. Most members had no wish to free slaves; their goal was only to reduce the numbers of free blacks in the country and thus help preserve the institution of slavery.   
  
By 1830 Garrison had rejected the programs of the American Colonization Society. By this time he had worked as co-editor of an antislavery paper started by Benjamin Lundy in Maryland, *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*. And on January 1, 1831, he published the first issue of his own anti-slavery newspaper, the *Liberator*.   
  
In speaking engagements and through the *Liberator* and other publications, Garrison advocated the immediate emancipation of all slaves. This was an unpopular view during the 1830s, even with northerners who were against slavery. What would become of all the freed slaves? Certainly they could not assimilate into American society, they thought. Garrison believed that they could assimilate. He believed that, in time, all blacks would be equal in every way to the country's white citizens. They, too, were Americans and entitled to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."  
  
Though circulation of the *Liberator* was relatively limited -- there were less than 400 subscriptions during the paper's second year -- Garrison soon gained a reputation for being the most radical of abolitionists. Still, his approach to emancipation stressed nonviolence and passive resistance, and he did attract a following. In 1832 he helped organize the New England Anti-Slavery Society, and, the following year, the American Anti-Slavery Society. These were the first organizations dedicated to promoting immediate emancipation.   
  
Garrison was unyielding and steadfast in his beliefs. He believed that the the Anti-Slavery Society should not align itself with any political party. He believed that women should be allowed to participate in the Anti-Slavery Society. He believed that the U.S. Constitution was a pro-slavery document. Many within the Society differed with these positions, however, and in 1840 there was a major rift in the Society which resulted in the founding of two additional organizations: the Liberty Party, a political organization, and the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, which did not admit women. Later, in 1851, the once devoted and admiring Frederick Douglass stated his belief that the Constitution could be used as a weapon against slavery. Garrison, feeling betrayed, attacked Douglass through his paper. Douglass responded, and the attacks intensified. Garrison and Douglass would never reconcile their differences.  
  
Although Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was a government decree, Garrison supported it wholeheartedly. After the end of the Civil War in 1865, Garrison published his last issue of the *Liberator*. After thirty five years and 1,820 issues, Garrison did not fail to publish a single issue.